

**REMARKS**

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-9 and 11-21 are pending. Claim 10 is canceled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claim 1 is amended, and claim 21 is added. Claims 1 and 21 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

**Claim for Priority**

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has recognized the Applicants' claim for foreign priority.

**Acknowledgement of Information Disclosure Statement**

The Examiner has not acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on June 27, 2001. Note also that another Information Disclosure Statement was filed on July 13, 2004. Clarification is requested in the next official communication.

**Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)**

Claims 1-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Malenkoff (U.S. 6,304,853). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

**Independent claims 1 and 21**

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended herein to recite

a combination of elements directed to apparatus for estimating a manufacturing cost for a product, including:

    a first input device for receiving input data concerning physical characteristics of the product to be manufactured;

    a cost calculation processor for calculating the manufacturing cost based on information inputted from said first input device, and cost factor data which is independently supplied from an external source using a second input device; and

    a display device for displaying the calculated manufacturing cost from said cost calculation processor,

    wherein said cost calculation processor calculates a plurality of alternative manufacturing costs, with each of the alternative manufacturing costs being associated with a respective one of a plurality of alternative process series for manufacturing the product, the plurality of process series being entered via said first input device.

In addition, independent claim 21 is added herein to recite a combination of elements directed to apparatus for estimating a manufacturing cost for a product including:

    a first input device and an associated first display device for receiving and viewing input data concerning physical characteristics of the product to be manufactured;

    a cost calculation processor for calculating the manufacturing cost based on information inputted from said first input device, and cost factor data independently supplied from an external source using a second input device;

    said first display device for displaying the calculated manufacturing costs from said

cost calculation processor,

wherein, upon entering a plurality of alternative process series for manufacturing the product via said first input device, said cost calculation processor calculates a plurality of alternative manufacturing costs, with each of the alternative manufacturing costs being associated with a respective one of the plurality of alternative process series for manufacturing the product, and displays said plurality of calculated manufacturing costs on said first display device,

wherein the calculated manufacturing costs displayed on said first display device change based on the cost factor data independently supplied from the external source using the second input device.

Support for the combination of elements set forth in each of claims 1 and 21 can be found in the specification, for example, in paragraphs [0039] and [0040]

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 21 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Malenkoff.

For example, Applicants respectfully submit that Malenkoff fails to disclose cost factor data independently supplied from an external source using a second input device, or costs displayed on said first display device change based on the cost factor data independently supplied using the second input device.

As described in paragraph [0017] of the specification, the present apparatus allows a user to display the latest manufacturing cost based on the latest updated cost factor data

inputted by the external resource. By contrast, nowhere in Malenkoff is there any hint of an apparatus calculating and displaying cost data based on multiple independent inputs.

At least for the reasons explained above, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claim 1 and 21 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Malenkoff.

Therefore, claims 1 and 21 are in condition for allowance. Further, dependent claims 2-9 and 11-20 are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

**CONCLUSION**

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

*Application No. 09/891,367*  
*Amendment dated September 2, 2004*  
*Reply to Office Action of June 2, 2004*

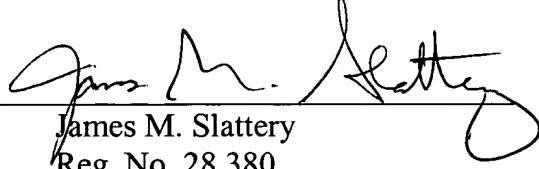
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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